



Exploring Court Records in Norway

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This class is designed to teach family history researchers how to find people in the Court Records of Norway.

Objectives:

Patrons will be able to find people in

- Deed Registration Record: Mortgage, Register of Land consolidation
- Legal Proceeding and sanctions
- Prison records with pictures of Prisoners

Background:

There are three types of court records that are useful for Family History Research. One that is included in the early court records is the Probate Record (non- criminal record) but has not been included in the court records since the early 1600's. Then there are Land Records, Tax Records, Deed Records, Court Records of civil and criminal actions and many others available under different titles and sub-titles in Digitalarkivet (The Digital Archives of Norway).

<https://www.digitalarkivet.no/en/>

General Information:

Digitalarkivet (The Digital Archives of Norway) is available online free of charge and here you will find most of the court records for Norway. Some of the court records and the kind of information they will include are:

Land Records: The pantebøker (mortgage records) give information about real estate transactions, such as deeds, conveyance of property, exchange of property, renunciation of inheritance, contracts for lease, auction sales, contracts of support after cession estate, bonds, and assessments. These records rarely start before 1700, some a little later. Early on much of the farmland in Norway was leased. It is a general opinion that around year 1500 only 1/2 to 1/3 of the land was cultivated by freeholders. This was because large parts of the land belonged to owners who did not operate the land themselves. Much of the land belonged to the Church, some to the Crown, some to Nobility, and some to townspeople. Sometimes the user would own part of the farm (farmland) he operated along with many other shareholders. Eventually, many of the farmers purchased land for themselves which happened in the 1700s. By 1814 2/3 of the land was owned by the farmers themselves. You will then see a farmer listed as selveier (self-owner) in the census records from 1801 and later.

At the time when the farmers did not own the land and would rent land to farm, they had to pay a fee to the owner. This is called a leaseholder fee, and it also became the measurement by which the land was appraised at the time of registration. The land rent was often designated in different types of commodities in the early 1700s and earlier, such as hud (hide), skinn (skins),

laug smør (laup smør = measure of 15.4 kg [kilogram]) 1 kg measures to 2.205 lb. Vaag fisk (vaag = measure of 18.52 kg fish). Vaag could also be used for korn (grain) and mel (flour). You will see these terms used in the records to list the value of a farm or the farmland. Later in the early 1800 money is used to give the value of a property.

A leilending (leaseholder) who paid the land rent to the church or the crown or who owned the real estate enjoyed certain rights and is not to be considered the same as a husmann (tenant farmer – crofter – cottager). The husmann also paid rent, as well as performing labor for the owner or leilending on the land he used, and he had very few rights.

Court Records: The court records start around the early 1600s or sometimes earlier. They contain reports of both criminal and civil actions. Some contain a wealth of genealogical information. Most records such as tax records, mortgage records, allodial land right, deeds, paternity, inheritance, theft, murder etc. are usually listed under the heading “Court Records” from early until mid-1600s. These records are available on microfilm at the Family History Library. They are also available online at Digitalarkivet (The Digital Archives of Norway) where they are listed under topics and sub-topics and are easy to find.

See also tax lists from 1519, Land registers from 1563, Other lists from 1602, Attachment fee from 1602 from Stavanger county: <https://www.wisted.net/telling.htm#Avskrift>

Search the tax list for Norway: <https://www.skatteetaten.no/en/forms/search-the-tax-lists/>

Norway Taxation: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Norway_Taxation

Digitalarkivet (The Digital Archives of Norway)

<https://www.digitalarkivet.no/en/>

How to find the Court Records.

Click on “Find source” which will bring you to the page where you can choose a place (county, or county and parish for a given area under the heading “Geography.” Next, you will be able to choose a topic under the heading “Category.” Notice towards the bottom you will find the headings Deed registration records, Landed property records, Legal proceedings and sanctions. If you click on the down arrow next to these headings there will be many sub-topics. Make your selections and click on “Search.” You may now search the records of your choice.